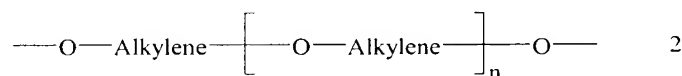


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide, said cross-linked polysaccharide being a polysaccharide cross-linked by an ether linkage consisting of a backbone chain of atoms, said backbone chain of atoms consisting of two terminal ether oxygen atoms, one or more intermediate oxygen link atoms and two or more $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ link groups, each intermediate oxygen link atom being an ether oxygen atom.
2. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 1 wherein said backbone chain of atoms comprises at least one -O-Alkylene- group, wherein Alkylene comprises from 1 to 5 $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ groups.
3. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 1 wherein said backbone chain of atoms comprises at least one $\text{-O-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ group.
4. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide, said cross-linked polysaccharide being a polysaccharide cross-linked by an ether linkage consisting of a backbone chain of atoms, said backbone chain of atoms having the formula 2



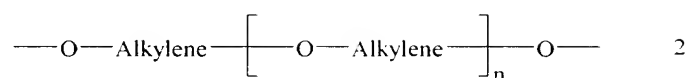
wherein each Alkylene consists of one or more $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ groups, wherein the two terminal oxygen atoms are ether oxygen atoms, and n is an integer of from 1 to 100.

5. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4 wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.

6. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4 wherein each Alkylene consists of from 1 to 5 $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ groups.
7. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 6 wherein each Alkylene is a $\text{-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ group.
8. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 7 wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.
9. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4 wherein said backbone chain of atoms is a group of formula $\text{-O-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-O-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-O-}$.

Claims 10-25 (canceled)

26. (original) A cross-linked starch, said cross-linked starch being a starch cross-linked by an ether linkage consisting of a backbone chain of atoms, said backbone chain of atoms consisting of two terminal ether oxygen atoms, one or more intermediate oxygen link atoms and two or more $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ link groups, each intermediate oxygen link atom being an ether oxygen atom.
27. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 26 wherein said backbone chain of atoms comprises at least one -O-Alkylene- group, wherein Alkylene comprises from 1 to 5 $\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ groups.
28. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 26 wherein said backbone chain of atoms comprises at least one $\text{-O-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-}$ group.
29. (original) A cross-linked starch, said cross-linked starch being a starch cross-linked by an ether linkage consisting of a backbone chain of atoms, said backbone chain of atoms having the formula 2



wherein each Alkylene consists of one or more -CH₂- groups, wherein the two terminal oxygen atoms are ether oxygen atoms, and n is an integer of from 1 to 100.

30. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.
31. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein each Alkylene consists of from 1 to 5 -CH₂- groups.
32. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 31 wherein each Alkylene is a -CH₂-CH₂group.
33. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 32 wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.
34. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein said backbone chain of atoms is a group of formula -O-CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-O-.
35. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein the starch is an anionic starch.
36. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein the starch is a carboxyalkyl starch wherein the alkyl moiety comprises from 1 to 3 carbon atoms.
37. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein the starch is a carboxymethyl starch.

Claims 38-62 (canceled)

63. (original) A cross-linked starch as defined in claim 29 wherein the starch is a starch half ester selected from the group consisting of starch maleate half ester, starch succinate half ester, starch sulfosuccinate half ester, starch citraconate half ester, starch glutarate half ester and starch phthalate half ester.
64. (canceled)
65. (canceled).
66. (currently amended) A cross-linked ~~polysaccharide~~ polysaccharide as defined in claim 1 wherein the ~~polysaccharide~~ polysaccharide is
- a starch selected from the group consisting of ~~starches~~ starches derived from corn, wheat, rice, potato, tapioca, waxy maize, sorghum, sago, and waxy sorghum,
 - a modified ~~starches~~ starch selected from the group ~~consisting~~ consisting of dextrinated, hydrolysed, oxidized, alkylated, hydroxyalkylated, acetylated, fractionated starches
 - a member selected from the group consisting of cellulose, dextrans, polygalactomannans, ionic and/or non-ionic derivatized, chitin/chitosan, alginate compositions, gums, xanthan gum, carageenan gum, gum karaya, gum arabic, pectin and glass-like polysaccharides; or
 - a member selected from the group consisting of anionic and cationic polysaccharides.
67. (currently amended) A cross-linked ~~polysaccharide~~ polysaccharide as defined in claim 66 wherein the anionic polysaccharides are selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides having groups selected from the group consisting of dicarboxylate and tricarboxylates groups.
68. (original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 66 wherein the anionic polysaccharides are selected from the group consisting of

polysaccharides having groups selected from the group consisting of iminodiacetate groups and citrate groups.

69. (currently amended) ~~The use of a polysaccharide as defined in claim 4~~ A mixture for use in a food pad; telecommunication cable wrappings (for non-biodegradable polymer) in agricultural and forestry applications to retain water in soil and to release water to the roots of plants; in fire-fighting techniques; bandages and surgical pads; for cleanup of acidic or basic aqueous solutions spills, including water soluble chemicals spills and; as polymeric gels for cosmetics and pharmaceuticals also known as drug delivery systems and slow release substances; and for artificial snow-, comprising an effective amount of a polysaccharide as defined in claim 1 and one or more other known absorbents.